

Advice for Career Planners Helping Their IT Field Customers

Using LinkedIn

August 10, 2015

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LinkedIn is an integral part of today's job search, and many job seekers need assistance in making their profiles shine. Here are some things to keep in mind when speaking to IT job seekers about LinkedIn.

LINKEDIN PROFILE NECESSITIES:

SUMMARY

Once a client knows what keywords they want to highlight, they can begin building their profile. A great place to start is their summary. A LinkedIn summary usually includes more personality than a resume summary, and is written in a more casual, conversational manner.

There are a variety of different ways people organize their summary, and there isn't one correct way to do it. If your client gets writer's block when they're creating their summary, a good template to start with is:

1. The opening paragraph, which describes what they do and what experience level they're at.
2. The next paragraph describes a select few accomplishments that relate to the job they're looking for. This is an excellent opportunity for keywords.
3. The 3rd paragraph describes their personal work style and any important soft skills that might help them land a role.
4. And lastly, contact information and how they prefer to be contacted.

KEYWORDS

One of the most important things for an IT person to have on their LinkedIn page is keywords; the same types of keywords we encourage job seekers to put on their resumes. This is obviously important for any profession, but it's particularly important in the world of IT since IT employment revolves around keywords. It's the exact same principle as an IT resume, which needs to include many keywords to get passed Applicant Tracking Systems. With LinkedIn, rather than getting passed an Applicant Tracking System with keywords, an IT job seeker is trying to attract companies with keywords. This is important in IT because there are many programming languages, operating systems, certifications, and acronyms in the world of IT and the only way companies can keep track of that while looking for a candidate is to search for keywords. Keywords fit nicely in the summary, headline, experience, and endorsements sections of a LinkedIn profile.

ENDORSEMENTS

An easy way to boost the amount of keywords on a page is through the Skills and Endorsements section. The more a client gets endorsed for a particular skill, the more that keyword will help out in search results. This makes it easier for a company to find your client if he or she has the skills that the company is looking for.

Endorsements are incredibly easy to do. Any 1st tier connection can choose a skill to endorse your client for. This simplicity is good news for getting endorsements, but it can be bad news if your client gets endorsed for something that isn't representative of their career goals. Job seekers should

make sure their list of endorsements is in line with their job aspirations; otherwise it can be confusing for someone visiting their page. These incorrect keywords can also attract the wrong recruiters and hiring managers, which would frustrate everyone involved.

If something like this happens, your client can click the little “X” next to the endorsement they want to delete, which will remove that keyword from their list.

CERTIFICATIONS

Many IT job seekers in the JD NEG program will be going to vocational training for a certification, and it’s very important that they document this training on their LinkedIn pages as soon as possible. Once a certification class starts, a client should document the certification on their page under either the Courses or the Education section of their profile. They should also put in their estimated completion date, so it’s clear to anyone visiting their page that your client hasn’t actually received the certification yet.

It’s also a good idea to spell out the certification in addition to the acronym (for example: A CCNA certification should be listed as “CCNA Cisco Certified Network Associate”). This is so both phrases will be captured in keyword searches.

After the client receives their certification, they can move this information to the Certifications section, which is only meant for certifications they have already earned as opposed to certifications they’re working toward.

COMPLETE PROFILE

Job seekers need to make sure that their profiles are “complete” according to LinkedIn. When LinkedIn’s algorithms have deemed a profile “complete”, it’s 40 times more likely to come up in search results than an incomplete profile. As that number suggests, having a complete profile is incredibly significant in using LinkedIn to its fullest during a job search. As of this writing, the measurement of profile completeness can be found at the top right of the profile page.

In order for a client to complete his or her profile, there’s a small checklist of things they need to do:

1. They absolutely need a picture. A LinkedIn profile will never be considered complete without one. The picture needs to be professional. It can be a very simple headshot while dressed in professional attire. It doesn’t have to be an expensive photo from a studio. The photo should also be relatively recent. If the photo they want to use is over 5 years old or so, it should be retaken. A hiring manager should be able to see the person in the picture and recognize them immediately when they walk in the door for an interview.
2. They need at least 50 connections. Any less than that and their profile won’t be complete.
3. They need 3 or more skills in the Skills and Endorsements section.
4. They need to list 2 past positions in the Experience section.

CUSTOMIZING THE URL

When a client signs up for LinkedIn, LinkedIn automatically gives them a direct URL link that is very long and cumbersome. Job seekers can customize their link to be short and easy to remember. This

way, they can include a direct link to their profile on their resume and business cards. To do this, click on the little gear under your picture on your profile page, this will allow you to customize the direct link to your profile.

EXTRA TIPS & QUESTIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are important for any job seeker on LinkedIn. Companies are looking for people on LinkedIn, and a good recommendation can go a long way in building interest in a potential candidate. A hiring manager who is interested in your client might see someone else on LinkedIn with very similar credentials. If the other person has 10 positive recommendations and your client has none, the choice is pretty simple.

Please click on this link for an excellent tutorial on writing and asking for LinkedIn recommendations: <http://www.sociablesales.com/how-to-write-and-recieve-unbeatable-recommendations-on-linkedin/>.

CONNECTIONS

Connections are really important in getting noticed on LinkedIn. The more connections someone has, the bigger their network is, and LinkedIn makes it very difficult for you to find someone who's outside of your network. Your network is comprised of your 1st, 2nd, and 3rd connections, plus any members of groups you've joined. Having a big network is important in getting found by companies and recruiters. Your client might have all the certifications and experience that a company is looking for, and they also might be in the perfect location geographically, but if they don't have a big enough network, the company won't be able to find them on LinkedIn.

Some people like to put the acronym "LION" on their profile or in their heading as a way of signifying that they're a LinkedIn Open Networker. What that means is that they'll accept a connection request from anyone, even if they've never heard of the person before. People do this in order to build their network up to be as big as possible. If this is an idea that resonates with your client, it might be a good way for them to build up their network. Conversely, a common criticism of becoming a LION is that you're diluting your connections with people who you don't actually know, making it more difficult to find your strong networking connections.

RESPONSES TO COMMON QUESTIONS REGARDING LINKEDIN:

"Why should I use LinkedIn?"

In 2014, companies used social media, and in particular LinkedIn, to aide in hiring 93% of all their new employees. This could be something as simple as a hiring manager checking a candidate's Facebook page to see what kind of person they are. What that means is that if your client doesn't have a LinkedIn account, or worse, if they have a terrible account, there's a 93% chance it'll be detrimental to them in terms of getting any particular job.

Also, to tie it to IT, the danger of not having a LinkedIn account makes a client look antiquated. Their lack of a presence online seems like they don't keep up on new technology and new tech trends, and what could be worse in the IT field than being antiquated?

“What do I put in my headline if I'm unemployed?”

In LinkedIn, the Headline is the short description next to your client's name on their profile. It's an important bit of information since it's almost always attached to their name. If their name comes up in search results, their headline will be next to it. This will also happen if they comment on a post, share an article, etc. Most people just leave the default Headline as is, which is simply your current job title and company. Others like to add a credential, such as CompTIA A+ or CCNA. Both methods work if you're currently employed, but for job seekers this creates a conundrum. Putting that you're unemployed in your headline makes you look desperate, and saying that you have a job when you don't is a bad idea, so what should a job seeker do?

There isn't a clear cut answer, but many LinkedIn experts will tell you to list credentials, as well as how you can help a company. Job seekers will want to keep it very short and have fun with it. Having keywords in the headline is also a very good idea.

Job seekers should stay away from saying anything that makes them sound desperate. Don't put “unemployed!” or “desperately seeking new role!” Those types of phrases are like recruiter repellent.

Please see the following link for additional information about creating a headline for a job seeker: <https://careerhorizons.wordpress.com/2011/09/24/linkedin-tip-how-handle-unemployment-status/>.

“What do I list as my current job title?”

This is a very common issue with job seekers on LinkedIn. The problem is that someone who doesn't have anything listed as a current job on LinkedIn will come up many pages lower in search results. So a job seeker, who's already at a disadvantage since most companies prefer to hire candidates who are already working, is even more disadvantaged on LinkedIn because they won't come up in search results if they don't have a job listed. It's a good idea for job seekers to put something as their current job. Job seekers shouldn't be untruthful here; the best solution is to put career goals as the job title (For example: Help Desk Professional or Network Engineer), and then put “Seeking Work” as the company name. This might sound a bit strange, but the client is being honest while not suffering from the disadvantages of leaving the job field blank.

“Should LinkedIn be the same info as my resume?”

Most experts say that your LinkedIn should complement your resume rather than be a carbon copy of it. One of the biggest differences is that resumes usually have page restrictions, which are usually 1 or 2 pages long or so, but LinkedIn doesn't have that. A LinkedIn profile can be as long as you want, provided it's an interesting read. You can spice your LinkedIn profile up with your own voice

and personality, which is normally discouraged on a resume. Many of the strict rules of resume writing don't need to be followed, such as writing bulleted lists under Work Experience.

A LinkedIn profile is an additional opportunity to sell yourself to a potential employer. The employer obviously liked your resume enough to check out your LinkedIn, so why waste that opportunity by retelling them the exact same information?